



**Draft Accessibility Plan
School District 8 Kootenay Lake**

Territorial Acknowledgement

We acknowledge, respect and honour the First Nations on whose traditional territories the Kootenay Lake School District operates, and all Aboriginal people residing within the boundaries of School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake).

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Introduction

[About Our School District Community](#)

School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) (SD8) mission is to inspire and support each learner to thrive in a caring learning environment.

SD8 enrolls approximately 4,800 students in approximately 23 schools throughout the district. Located in the southern Interior of British Columbia, Canada, SD8 serves the communities of Kaslo, Meadow Creek, Crawford Bay, Creston, Wynndel, Yahk, Nelson, Salmo, South Slocan, Winlaw, Slocan, and the surrounding rural areas. Our visionary, creative team of approximately 900 staff focus on providing the best opportunities we can for students and their families. Our leadership team and staff are very committed to providing a positive educational environment that fosters each child's learning in an accessible and inclusive environment.

SD8 provides many different school programs that enrich or complement our students' educational studies. We have a robust International Program, an Early Learning Program, an Aboriginal Education Program, a Career Development Program, and a French Immersion Program. We also support students with disabilities through District and School-Based Inclusive Education Programs.

[Commitment](#)

SD8 is committed to providing a learning and working environment that supports all students and staff and provides equitable opportunities to support our diverse community. A key element to supporting our community is the development of a Three-Year Accessibility Plan. This plan identifies system needs, priorities, and action plans, and draws on feedback from our school community and the advice of the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the work of the Accessibility Development Working Group to enhance equity of access to programming and our facilities.

Our Accessibility Development Working Group is a diverse and multi-disciplinary team will develop an accessibility scan that will provide school data that the future Accessibility Advisory Committee can use to develop a Three-Year Accessibility Plan. The plan will identify measurable actions across the pillars of the Accessibility Act, supporting equal opportunity for persons with disabilities by identifying, removing, and preventing barriers of access.

SD8 recognizes the importance of accessibility not only for those with disabilities, but also for the benefit of the entire community. The Accessibility Advisory Committee will make recommendations for developing accessible environments that support all students, staff and the larger school community. SD8 is committed to advancing the efforts of the Accessibility Advisory Committee to improve equity and to enhance the ease of access to services and facilities.

[Definitions](#)

Accessibility: The state of having programs, services and environments that allow all individuals to participate fully in society without encountering barriers.

Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Accessibility Development Working Group: Supportive structures is SD8 that includes at least half representation from people with disabilities, with the purpose of creating a Three-Year Accessibility Plan and providing recommendations to the district.

Accessibility Plan: A plan developed by an Accessibility Advisory Committee that identify challenges and solutions for addressing accessibility barriers.

Barrier: Anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability. This includes physical/environmental, attitudinal, information, communications, policy or practice, and technological barriers.

Types of Barriers

Physical/Environmental Barrier: A barrier resulting from building design, smells/sounds, lighting, the area adjacent to the building, shape of rooms, the size of doorways, and so on.

Attitudinal Barrier: A barrier that arises from the attitudes of staff, students and the school community, including discriminatory behaviours and a lack of disability awareness.

Communication Barrier: A barrier that arises from difficulties receiving information in person, by telephone or online, interacting with teachers, peers, receptionists or other staff, and receiving training.

Information Barrier: A barrier that arises from inadequate or incomprehensible signage, difficulties reading brochures, forms, manuals, websites, fax transmissions, equipment labels, computer screens, and so on.

Policy or Practice Barrier: Rules, regulations and protocols that prevent a person from performing their job satisfactorily or participating in society. Policy, practice, and procedures that prevent a student from accessing the curriculum and fully participating in the school community.

Technological Barrier: Barriers resulting from computers, photocopiers, fax machines, telephones and switches, including the lack of assistive technologies.

Disability: The state of being unable to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction between an impairment and a barrier. (For more information about disability and types of disability and support, refer to Appendix A: Disabilities.)

Impairment: A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual, cognitive limitation, whether permanent, temporary or episodic.

Framework Guiding our Work

The School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) Draft Accessibility Plan builds on global, national, provincial and school district specific actions to promote and support accessibility.

Global Context - United Nations

In recent years, there has been an emphasis on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion within the workplace and within the larger community. The United Nations has been instrumental in leading the importance of disability as a global health issue. In 2006, the United Nations led efforts to adopt the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In 2010, Canada ratified the CRPD and described the CRPD as follows:

“The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international human right treaty aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the Convention of the rights of Persons with Disabilities are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities including full equality under the law.”

Canadian Context and Legislation - Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Canada-wide, around one in five people had some form of disability in 2017.

Nationally, Canadian accessibility legislation started in 1985 where disability was included in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in 1986, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were included in the new federal Employment Equity Act. The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) came into force in 2019, with the overarching goal to realize a barrier-free Canada by 2040. This act applies to federally regulated entities. The ACA has seven focus areas, and was developed based on the following guiding principles:

1. All persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities.
2. All persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities.
3. All persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities.
4. All persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities.
5. Laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons.
6. PWDs must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services and structures.
7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for PWDs.

[B.C. Context and Legislation - Accessible B.C. Act](#)

The Accessible British Columbia Act, enacted in June 2021, and initially the Accessibility Planning requirements only applied to provincial government organizations.

The Accessible British Columbia Regulation, under the Accessible British Columbia Act, came into force on September 1, 2022. These regulations identify schools as accessible organizations, and school districts and independent schools will be required to have an Accessibility Committee, an Accessibility Plan, and a tool to receive feedback on accessibility.

The goal of the act is to improve opportunities for people with disabilities and involve them in identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to their full participation in the life of the province.

[Principles in the Accessible B.C. Act](#)

The Accessible B.C. Act includes a list of principles that must be considered as organizations develop an Accessibility Plan. The Definitions are adapted from the foundational document [BC Framework for Accessibility Legislation](#).

Adaptability: Accessibility Plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

Collaboration: Promoting accessible communities is a shared responsibility and everyone has a role to play. Accessibility Plans should create opportunities for Organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.

Diversity: Every person is unique. People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Individual characteristics including race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and lived experience greatly inform the experiences of individuals. Accessibility Plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.

Inclusion: All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.

Self-Determination: Accessibility Plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.

Universal Design: The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.” An Accessibility Plan should be designed to meet the needs of all people who interact with the Organization.

[Our Commitment to Accessibility](#)

Accessibility refers to the degree of ease with which people with disabilities can use and enjoy something such as a device, service, or place. SD8 is committed to providing an

environment that is accessible and practical for all members of our diverse community. We recognize the importance of conscious planning, design, and effort in ensuring that barriers are removed, and accessibility is increased.

The district is committed to working collaboratively with the community to provide equitable treatment to people with disabilities in a way that respects their dignity.

To achieve this goal, we outline the following commitments:

- Engage with staff, community members and people with disabilities in the development and review of its draft Accessibility Plan.
- Ensure that our school district policies and procedures align with the principles of accessibility.
- Improve access to facilities, policies, programs, practices, and services for students, staff, parents/guardians, volunteers and community members.
- Continually improve accessibility for people with disabilities in our school community.

Our Approach

SD8 believes that all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity, given an opportunity to participate, and provided with access to learning and community. Our approach is grounded in the core provincial principles of accessibility, including adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination and universal design.

In April 2023, an Accessibility Development Working Group was established to identify barriers to accessibility in our school district community. This process involved:

- Developing the Accessibility Development Working Group, including accessibility experts in the district, department leaders with expertise about working with accessibility, students with lived experience, an Aboriginal education leader, and a parent expert working with the disability community
- Initially assessing the current physical accessibility of district schools through a survey of school principals
- Developing a district-wide feedback tool
- Beginning the process to review the district website for accessibility (with the Public Engagement Manager)
- Developing a comprehensive accessibility scan for schools and district sites to inform the upcoming work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Determining the process of performing an accessibility scan in the district
- Researching other districts and organizations for best practices and administrative procedures
- Updating administrative procedures with accessibility guidelines

Our approach is designed to recognize the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility in our community. By engaging in thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action, we aim to deliver lasting accessibility improvements for all members of our community.

The Accessibility Working Group and Committee Structures

Purpose of the Accessibility Committee

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, organizations must establish an Accessibility Committee to assist with identifying and preventing barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization. The purpose of the Accessibility Committee is to work collaboratively to assess and improve community accessibility, focusing on the experiences of individuals with disabilities while encompassing the whole community. The Accessibility Committee will make recommendations to the district about strategies to reduce social, physical, sensory and other barriers that prevent people from fully participating in all aspects of school community life.

Recruitment of the Accessibility Committee members

Under the Accessible B.C. Act, the selection of Accessibility Committee members must, to the extent possible, align with the following goals:

- At least half the members are persons with disabilities (PWD), or individuals who support or are from organizations that support PWDs;
- At least one member is an Indigenous person; and
- Members reflect the diversity of persons in B.C.

Consultation Conducted

Barrier Identification Methodologies

The Accessibility Development Working Group was established in 2023 to identify barriers to accessibility in our school district community.

This process involved:

- Seeking interest from students and staff for membership on an Accessibility Development Working Group;
- Initially assessing the current physical accessibility of schools;
- Collecting information from principals to understand the issues, challenges, and priorities in schools;
- Holding initial discussions to identify barriers to accessibility;

- Beginning the work to develop a district-wide feedback tool and accessible website;
- Creating an accessibility scan for the district;
- Researching other districts and organizations for best practices and administrative procedures; and
- Aligning administrative procedure with accessibility guidelines.

Gaps and opportunities were identified to improve accessibility in our community. By engaging in thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action, we aim to deliver lasting accessibility improvements for all members of our community.

Seeking Information About Barriers To Accessibility

Thus far, the Accessibility Development Working Group has undertaken the following work regarding accessibility:

- An accessibility and inclusion survey was developed and distributed to school principals.
- A review of current policies and practices that promote accessibility and inclusion was conducted by key Inclusive Education staff members.
- A physical accessibility review for our schools' physical accessibility started to be researched by Inclusive Education staff.
- SD8 staff worked with the BC Council of Administrators' in Special Education (BC CAISE) and the Ministry of Education and Child Care to learn about the Accessible BC Act and its implementation, as well as the requirements of the Accessibility Plan.
- SD8 staff and students took the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility 101 course.
- The district's draft Accessibility Plan was published and a feedback tool was developed and posted to the district website. Information about the tool was shared with district and the school community (i.e., students, staff, outside professionals and parents/guardians).
- The Accessibility Development Working Group reviewed the district's Accessibility Plan and collaborated to suggest priority areas to target in the Accessibility Plan.
- The working group finalized the development of the Accessibility Scan. This scan will be sent to schools in April 2024 and will form the basis of information for developing an Action Plan for the next three year.
- Accessibility Advisory Committee structure was developed to further deepen the work of the Working Group to provide ongoing advice and feedback.

Feedback Mechanism

Feedback Mechanism Development

SD8 has developed an online feedback tool that includes a series of questions about accessibility experiences that students, staff and members of the school district community can complete. The tool is posted to the main page of the district website and an information announcement about the tool has been provided to students, staff and parents/guardians. Feedback can be anonymous, or people can add their name and contact information if they wish to be contacted. There is also an option for people to upload a video, voice recording or photo(s). The following is the contents of the online Accessibility Feedback Tool, that will continue to be available to identify current or future accessibility issues.

Report an Accessibility Barrier

At School District 8 Kootenay Lake, we want to learn about specific barriers that people face when they are trying to:

- *Access a school program, building or school information*
- *Receive a service or support*

Your responses to the questions below will be reviewed by the School District 8 Kootenay Lake Accessibility Development Working Group for their consideration. This information can be submitted anonymously, or you can provide your contact details at the bottom of this form if you wish to be contacted.

1. *Please provide the date the barrier was experienced.*
2. *Please select the location the barrier was experienced.*
3. *What were you or someone you know trying to access?*
4. *Accessibility Barrier Details (Be as specific as possible).*
5. *Do you have any recommendations for what would make it better?*
6. *Attach files if you wish to provide additional information (e.g., video, voice recording, photos).*
7. *Please provide your name and email or phone number if you would like to be contacted. (optional)*

Thank you for providing your valuable feedback! You will be contacted shortly if you have provided your contact details.

Accessibility Accomplishments and Barriers

Key Discussion Themes - Accessibility Accomplishments

The guiding principles of inclusive practice inform SD8's programs, policies, practices, and services to reduce and minimize barriers to accessibility for people with disabilities. We strive to create an environment that is accessible and to ensure continuous improvement in accessibility.

There are a number of initiatives at SD8 already in place to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The following is a synopsis of some of the major achievements noted in the feedback from principals from the spring of 2023:

Information and Communication

- Shared information on the accessibility act with district/school staff and students.
- Schools' libraries maintain a suite of documents accessible to school staff outlining the various methods by which the librarian can support student and staff requests for accessible library resources such as audiobooks, high interest/low vocabulary books, and closed-captioned videos.

School Policies and Practices

Adaptations for Students:

- The district and schools continue to assess student accommodation requirements on a case-by-case basis and use all relevant information to respond to each scenario.
- The district has established practices and procedures by which adaptations are offered throughout our schools.

Mental Health and Well-being Supports

- The district recognizes the importance of mental health and well-being of its students and staff, especially as the world has experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects. Initiatives have taken place to assess and improve the mental health and well-being of students and staff to ensure support and positive outcomes.
- Training programs are offered to staff to promote student mental health and improve personal mental health and well-being and reduce stigma associated with mental illness.

Accessibility Awareness

- Accessibility awareness (such as the Rick Hansen Foundation's course Accessibility 101) is available for staff to promote accessibility awareness and provide information about accessibility obligations, and inclusive environments.

Physical Environment

- The district will be conducting an Accessibility Scan of all of our schools and

- worksites, starting in spring 2024.
- The district has invested in several upgrades to existing facilities to new standards that support accessible school communities. Investments have been targeted to upgrade washroom accessibility, ramps, elevator upgrades, upgraded fire alarms complete with strobes, playgrounds and outside play spaces, and parking and curb cut enhancements to support main entrance access improvements.

Key Discussion Themes - Accessibility Barriers

Information and Communication Barriers

- Some community members have identified that it is difficult to navigate the school and district websites and to locate information they hoped to access. Feedback has also indicated that some people with low vision and with English as a second language have had to rely on family members to read or translate information on SD8 websites.
- Email communication to parents/guardians and staff is not always written in language that is easy to understand or contains information that is sometimes confusing.
- Communication with students and parents/guardians about assignments is provided inconsistently in various classes, resulting in some students not knowing or understanding what they need to do for homework.
- Some staff indicate they need more training to help them interact with students with specific disabilities.

Physical Environment Barriers

- Many classrooms have noise issues that make it difficult for some students due to auditory sensitivities.
- Most classrooms do not have sound fields to support students with hearing impairments or attention issues.
- Some larger spaces within our schools have sound echo issues.

Attitudinal Barriers

- Some students identify that they feel misunderstood by staff who make assumptions about their ability or motivation.

Technology Barriers

- Teachers and students are not familiar with the accessibility features on district/school laptops/computers such as voice to text, text to voice, web readers and other features.

School Policy and Practice Barriers

- Students and staff have identified that school policies and practices are sometimes hard to find, hard to read, and hard to understand.

Preparation of a Three-Year Plan

Overview

The Draft Accessibility Plan outlines the areas that SD8 and the Accessibility Advisory Committee along with the Accessibility Development Working Group will review in order to remove and prevent barriers and to promote inclusion for individuals with disabilities in our school district community. The plan is based on the Accessibility Principles of Adaptability, Collaboration, Diversity, Inclusion, Self- Determination, and Universal Design, as set out in the Accessible B.C. Act.

Accessibility Priorities

Thus far, the Accessibility Development Working Group has identified the following areas as the top priority for improving accessibility in the school district community.

Priority 1: Information and Communication

Enhance the accessibility of information and communication for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

- Objectives will be developed after the Accessibility Scan has been conducted.

Priority 2: Physical Environments

Improve the accessibility of the physical environment for all individuals, including those with disabilities through the following actions:

- Objectives will be developed after the Accessibility Scan has been conducted.

Priority 3: School Policy and Practice

Review and revise policies to ensure they align with the principles of accessibility, and to address any identified gaps in staff training or knowledge on accessibility issues.

- Objectives will be developed after the Accessibility Scan has been conducted.

Priority 4: Technology

Increase awareness and training on assistive technology for students with disabilities.

- Objectives will be developed after the Accessibility Scan has been conducted

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will be convened after the Accessibility Scan has been conducted, in order to review the results of the scan and will make recommendations for objectives in each of these areas, along with a Three-Year Action Plan with timeline.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Accessibility Development Working Group will meet five times per year to advance the work of the broader Accessibility Advisory Committee's recommendations and to review the progress toward realizing the goals of the Accessibility Plan.

The Accessibility Advisory Committee will meet twice per year to review progress and

evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's implementation and plan for increased accessibility throughout the school. The committee will ensure the following steps are taken regarding the Three-Year Accessibility Plan:

1. Prepare an annual status report on the progress of the measures taken to implement the plan.
2. Review and update the Three-Year Accessibility Plan every three years in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant community members.

How to Give Us Feedback

In addition to the public availability of the plan, SD8 will post an annual status report on the progress of the Three-Year Accessibility Plan on the district website. Accessible formats of the plan will be made available upon request.

Questions, comments or feedback regarding the Accessibility Plan may be directed to:

Deanna Holitzki (she/her) Assistant Superintendent - Inclusive Education
Deanna.holitzki@sd8.bc.ca

Appendices

[Appendix A: About Disability The Disability Continuum](#)

There is no universally accepted meaning for the word "disability". However, the Ontario Human Rights Code provides definitions of disability that form our guiding principles. Definitions of disability can be placed on a continuum. At one end, disability is explained in terms of medical conditions (medical model). At the opposite end, disability is explained in terms of the social and physical contexts in which it occurs (environmental model). The medical model focuses on deficiencies, symptoms and treatments. The World Health Organization's (WHO) 1976 definition for disability, for example, is "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being." Medical model definitions promote the idea that disability is a deviation from the norm.

Many people with disabilities are troubled by definitions that regard disability as abnormal, preferring instead to portray disability as commonplace, natural, and in fact, inevitable. As people age, they experience gradual declines in visual acuity, auditory sensitivity, range of motion, bodily strength and mental powers.

Significant functional limitations affect almost half of people between the ages of 55 and 79, and over 70% of people over 80 (World Health Organization (WHO) report titled "Ageing and health", 2015). Beyond middle age, disability is the norm. The environmental model explains disability in relation to social and physical contexts. In this view, the environment, not an individual's medical condition, causes disability. For example, during an electrical blackout, a person who is completely blind can effortlessly navigate around the home, hammer nails, and, if a Braille user, read a novel.

A sighted person would be unable to perform these tasks easily, if at all. In this example, the environment disables the sighted person.

The environmental model emphasizes that people with disabilities are capable individuals, and it is the barriers in the built and human environments, not their medical conditions, that create disability. Disability occurs when the world is designed only for a certain way of living, without considering the natural variation among human beings. Barriers are created by humans, and modifying how we live, the tools we use, and our understanding of the proper way to do things can eliminate or minimize design problems that cause barriers. Systematic barriers can be eliminated by modifying policies, plans, and processes. Attitudes that cause barriers can be addressed through disability awareness, respect, and positive interactions with people with disabilities.

[Types of Disability and Functional Limitations](#)

A person's disability may make it physically or cognitively challenging to perform everyday tasks such as operating a keyboard, reading a sign, differentiating colours, distinguishing sounds, climbing stairs, grasping small items, remembering words, or doing arithmetic. There are many kinds of disabilities, including physical, sensory, hearing, mental health, developmental and learning. Disabilities can be visible or invisible.

[Visual Disabilities](#)

Visual disabilities reduce one's ability to see clearly. Very few people are totally blind. Some have limited vision such as tunnel vision, where a person has a loss of peripheral or side vision, or a lack of central vision, which means they cannot see straight ahead. Some can see the outline of objects while others can see the direction of light. Impaired vision can restrict a person's ability to read signs, locate landmarks or see hazards. In some cases, it may be difficult to tell if a person has a visual disability. Others may use a guide dog or white cane. Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with visual disabilities:

- Identify yourself when you approach the person and speak directly to them.
- Speak normally and clearly.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Unless it is an emergency, only touch the person if you have been given permission.
- If you offer assistance, wait until you receive permission.
- Offer your arm (the elbow) to guide the person and walk slowly.
- Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- If you're giving directions or verbal information, be precise and clear. For example, if you're approaching a door or an obstacle, say so. Don't just assume the individual can't see you.
- When entering a room, show the individual to a chair, or guide them to a comfortable location.
- Identify landmarks or other details to orient the person to the environment around them.
- Ensure you say good-bye prior to leaving the individual.
- Be patient. Things may take a little longer.

Hard of Hearing and Deafness

People who have hearing loss may be deaf or hard of hearing. Like other disabilities, hearing loss has a wide variety of degrees. People who are hard of hearing may require assistive devices when communicating. While some people may use sign language, notes or hearing aids when communicating, others may also use email, pagers, TTY telephone service or Bell Canada Relay Service.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Always ask how you can help. Don't shout.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Attract the person's attention before speaking. The best way is a gentle touch on the shoulder or gently waving your hand.
- Make sure you are in a well-lighted area where the person can see your face.
- Look at and speak directly to the person. Address the person, not their interpreter.
- If necessary, ask if another method of communicating would be easier, for example a pen and paper.
- Keep your face clearly visible when speaking.
- Be clear and precise when giving directions and repeat or rephrase if necessary. Make sure you have been understood.

- Service animals are working and have to pay attention at all times. Refrain from engaging with the animal.
- Any personal (e.g., financial) matters should be discussed in a private room to avoid other people overhearing.
- Be patient. Communication for people who are deaf is different because their first language may not be English. It may be American Sign Language (ASL).
- If the person uses a hearing aid, try to speak in an area with few competing sounds.

Physical Disabilities

There are many types and degrees of physical disabilities and not all require a wheelchair. For example, people who have arthritis, heart or lung conditions, or amputations may also have difficulty moving, standing or sitting. It may be difficult to identify a person with a physical disability.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with physical disabilities:

- Speak normally and directly to the person rather than someone who is with them.
- People with physical disabilities often have their own ways of doing things. Ask before you help.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- Be patient and be sure you understand their needs.
- Unless it is an emergency, refrain from touching any assistive devices, including wheelchairs.
- Provide the person with information about accessible features of the immediate environment (automatic doors, accessible washrooms, etc.).

Intellectual Disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one’s ability to learn. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with intellectual disabilities:

- As much as possible, treat the person with an intellectual disability like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.
- Don’t assume what a person can or cannot do.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like “handicapped”.
- Use simple words and short sentences.
- Make sure the person understands what you’ve said.
- If you can’t understand what’s being said, ask again.
- Give one piece of information at a time.
- Be polite and patient.
- Speak directly to the person, not to someone who is with the person.

Learning or Cognitive Disabilities

Learning or cognitive disabilities can result in a host of different communications difficulties for people. They can be subtle, as in having difficulty reading, or more pronounced, but they can interfere with the person's ability to receive, express or process information. You may not be able to know that someone has one of these disabilities unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or body language.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with learning disabilities or disabilities:

- Patience and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.
- Recognize that some people with communication difficulties use augmentative communication systems such as Signed English and Picture Exchange System.
- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help.
- Speak normally and clearly, and directly to the person
- Take some time – people with some kinds of disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond.
- Try to find ways to provide information in a way that works best for them. For example, have a paper and pen handy.
- If you're dealing with a child, be patient, encouraging and supportive.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- Be courteous and patient and the person will let you know how to best provide service in a way that works for them.

Mental Health Disabilities

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You won't know that the person has a mental health disability unless you're informed of it. But if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help out. Be calm and professional and let the person tell you how you can best help.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with mental health disabilities:

- Treat people with a mental health disability with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- Be confident and reassuring and listen to persons with a mental health disability and their needs.
- If someone appears to be in a crisis, ask him or her to tell you the best way to help.
- Take the person with a mental health disability seriously, and work with them to meet their needs.

Speech and Language Disabilities

Some people have communication challenges. It could be the result of cerebral palsy, hearing loss, or another condition that makes it difficult to pronounce words, causes slurring or stuttering, or not being able to express oneself or understand written or spoken language. Some people who have severe difficulties may use communication boards, sign language or other assistive devices.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people with speech and language disabilities:

- Just because a person has one disability doesn't mean they have another. For example, if a person has difficulty speaking; make no assumption they have an

intellectual disability as well.

- If you don't understand, ask the person to repeat the information.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- If you are able, ask questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'.
- Take some time. Be patient and polite and give the person whatever time they need to get their point across.
- Allow the individual to finish their sentences themselves without interruption.
- Patience, respect and a willingness to find a way to communicate are your best tools.

Deaf-Blind Disabilities

A person who is deafblind cannot see or hear to some extent. This results in greater difficulties in accessing information and managing daily activities. Most people who are deafblind will be accompanied by an intervener, a professional who helps with communicating. Interveners are trained in special sign language that involves touching the hands of the client in a two-hand, manual alphabet or finger spelling, and may guide and interpret for their client.

Here are some suggestions to help you interact with people who are deafblind:

- Make no assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Some deaf-blind people have some sight or hearing, while others have neither.
- Avoid referring to the disability or using phrases like "handicapped".
- A deaf-blind person is likely to explain to you how to communicate with them or give you an assistance card or a note explaining how to communicate with them.
- Speak directly to the person, as you normally would, not to the intervener.
- Identify yourself to the intervener when you approach the person who is deaf-blind.
- Don't touch service animals - they are working and have to pay attention at all times.
- Unless it's an emergency, refrain from touching a deaf-blind person without permission.

Appendix B: References/Resources

Global, Canadian and Local Accessibility Context and Legislation

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Canada Ratifies UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)
- [British Columbia Framework for Accessibility Legislation](#)
- [Accessible British Columbia Act](#)
- [BC Accessibility Legislation Plan Language Summary](#)

Accessibility Planning Resources

- [BC Accessibility Hub](#)
- [Universal Design](#)
- [Special Education Technology BC \(SET BC\)](#)
- [Accessible Resource Centre - BC](#)
- [Standards Council of Canada](#)
- [B6521-95 Barrier-Free Design](#)
- [A Guide to Creating Accessible Play Spaces](#) (Rick Hansen Foundation)
- [Canadian National Institute for the Blind \(CNIB\)](#)
- [Canadian Hard of Hearing Association](#)
- [Canadian Hearing Services](#)
- [Auditory Outreach Provincial Resource Program](#)
- [Provincial Inclusion Outreach Program \(Complex Needs\)](#)
- [Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada](#)
- [Learning Disabilities Association of Canada](#)
- [Brain Injury Canada](#)
- [Spinal Cord Injury Canada](#)
- [Tourette Canada](#)
- [Kelty Mental Health](#) (BC Children's Hospital)
 - [Gifted Children's Association of BC](#)